

Mrs. Bowser Denies Report

Contradicts the Story That Mr. B.'s Skating Trip Finished Him.

RELY HAD A BAD FALL

Ambition to Cut Pigeon Wings With the Young People Came to a Sudden End.

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MAKE this communication to the newspapers to correct a report that my husband, Mr. Bowser, met with a fatal accident a few days ago and will be heard of no more. I very much dislike to bring our family troubles before the public, I feel I ought to set myself right in certain matters.

One evening a week ago Mr. Bowser came home from the office with a pack under his arm. With natural female curiosity I wanted to know the contents at once, but with one excuse after another he put me off until after dinner. When we had reached the sitting room he opened the package and showed me a pair of new ice skates. "Did you find them?" I asked. "I should say not."

"Are you going to make a present to me?"

"Certainly not."

"But they are not for yourself?"

"To be sure they are. Why not?"

"But you can't skate, and you are too old and too heavy to learn. You tried two years ago and had such a fall that your back was lame for three months."

Intransigent, as usual.

"Woman, what are you talking about?" he demanded as he flushed up. "Every time you get a chance you ring that I am too old or too heavy for that, as if I was some superannuated



HE HAD ON A KNICKERBOCKER SUIT.

behemoth. Is a man in his dotage forty-eight? Is a man weighing 150 pounds a haystack?"

Mr. Bowser is fifty-four years old and weighs 185 pounds, but as the matter is painful one to him I never mention it. I did not correct him in this case, and after a glare at me he continued:

"Yes, two years ago I went up to the park and did a little ice skating. Crowds congregated to see me cut pigeon wings. I carried off all the honors, and instead of having a fall and a lame leg I got rid of my rheumatism for three or four months. Why can't you stick to the truth in making your statements?"

"But you weren't thinking of trying again?" I queried.

"And why not?"

"Because you will be sure to—to—"

Would Cut Pigeon Wings.

"Now, just leave it right there. I ought these skates to skate with. There is skating at the park. I shall go up there this evening; I shall cut pigeon wings; I shall perform curlicues; I shall make every other fancy figure take a back seat."

"And you will come down with a crash and probably put both hips out of joint."

"If I do I won't ask you to nurse me through it. By the seven spotted bulls of India, you are gradually driving me to the dead line. I don't wonder that husbands who have been nagged for years and years finally turn and chop their wives up with an ax."

"I'm not nagging," I answered. "I'm just saying that it is curious that you could go and buy a pair of skates when you can hardly stand up on them. You will only give the papers another chance to die at you."

He looked around the room for the first time and a crowbar to strike her dead with, but, not finding either, he turned and walked upstairs to change his

clothes. When he came down I saw that he must have smuggled a parcel into the house the night before. He had on a knickerbocker suit, leather leggings and cap, and to save my life I couldn't help smiling as he stood before me. He looked like a fat boy in the circus.

"Still on the grin, I see!" he thundered at me, but as I didn't answer he went down the hall for his overcoat and banged the door after him as he went out.

A woman can be two hours or ten minutes getting ready to go somewhere. I was only ten minutes in getting ready to follow Mr. Bowser. I caught the next car behind him. I knew what entrance he would take to reach the lake in the park, and he hadn't got his skates on when I found him. He didn't seem to be in any hurry either. He sat around like a boy with the toothache, and once or twice he seemed to be on the point of going home. A policeman finally sauntered up and said:

"These benches are for the use of skaters."

"Well, ain't I a skater?" replied Mr. Bowser.

"You don't look like it to me. You look more like a man who'd roll around. However, if you are a skater get busy."

The conversation was overheard by half a dozen people, and, being put on his mettle, Mr. Bowser began to fasten on his skates. He had had them on for five minutes, looking distrustfully at the ice all the time, when the policeman came along again and said:

"What! Loafing around yet? If you can't skate you'd better give that rig to some cross-eyed orphan boy. Shall I get a ten-year-old girl to take your arm and tell you which foot goes first?"

He is Guyed.

"You can mind your own business, sir!" replied Mr. Bowser as he got the boiled lobster color in his face.

"Don't sass me!"

"And don't you be guying me!"

The officer walked on, and a score of skaters gathered around Mr. Bowser and indulged in such remarks as:

"I'll bet he'll show us a few tricks when he does get started."

"I'll bet so too. He's got the right sort of legs for a skater."

"What are you guys talking about? Can a cider barrel skate?"

"If he's going to smash the ice I'm going home to play with my rag doll," said a girl of sixteen.

Mr. Bowser had to get a move on him. I could read his thoughts as plain as print. He was saying to himself that he'd give a thousand dollars if he was safe home with me and the cat. It was too late for that. He got up and wobbled around and finally reached the ice and grabbed hold of a bush to steady himself. He was standing there, with his eyes as big as saucers and his chin quivering, when there were some more remarks. They were to the following effect:

"Some one get him a pair of crutches!"

"If you can't skate get down and roll over!"

"By George, he thinks he sees a ghost!"

"Hang to the limb, old coon! If you move you are a goner!"

"Oh, shut up, and give the old gent a show! He'll start off pretty quick and make us all look silly."

Then the girl who had spoken before chipped in with:

"My ma told me that if the baby elephant broke loose and got on the ice I was to come right home and study my spelling lesson."

His Usual Finish.

Poor Mr. Bowser had to draw a long breath, commend his soul to a higher power and get a hump on him. He hadn't scrambled along over ten feet when one of his legs went up in the air, he spun around two or three times and then came down with a jar that Don Castro would have paid a thousand dollars for to present to the French cable company. My shriek was echoed by fifty others, and the policeman came running up and grabbed the poor victim by the collar and drew him to land and said:

"It's the same old coon that was sitting around here ten minutes ago. I told him then that he was no skater."

"Is he dead?" asked one of the crowd.

"No, but he's got a lesson. That jar has sort of driven him together, and he won't be more than five feet high after this. Does any one here know him?"

"I went forward and gave his identity and address, and the ambulance was summoned, and he was conveyed home. They told me he was very quiet on the trip. As he was carried into the house he simply sighed. As I got out plasters and liniments and cared for him he looked at me in a puzzled way and muttered something about pigeon wings. I have had the doctor for him, but the M. D. says that no bones are actually broken. It is a case of telescope. The victim is still lying in a lethargic state, opening his eyes and looking around now and then, and it will probably be another week before he can shout 'Woman!' at me and announce that I can go home to mother while he is arranging about the divorce. Meanwhile all reports of his untimely demise may be contradicted by the press."

SARAH BOWSER.
Wife of Mr. Bowser.

April 15th is EASTER "Nuff Sed"

L. D. HARLEY

Tailoring,

CLEANING, DYEING, PRESSING

"Our Pull is Push"

Arcadia, Florida

The Little Skaters

(Original.)

One Saturday afternoon two little boys concluded that they would go down to the river, which was frozen near the shores, to skate. They were Tommy and Willie Bickford, aged respectively eight and six years. Taking their skates—Willie had but one—they sallied forth, and, reaching the ice, Tommy put on his two skates, Willie put on his one, and they proceeded to have a good time. And they had a good time. The nipping air was full of ozone, and there was about an acre of ice that was as smooth as glass. Tommy could skate pretty well if he skated straight ahead, but he insisted on cutting "dubdubs," as he called them—Tommy's dubdubs were a figure eight and the Dutch roll—and he was continually sitting down and pointing his toes to the sky. As for his little brother, having only one skate and not knowing how to skate anyway, he bore the weight of his little body on the foot without the skate and hopped along, occasionally lifting the sole of his shoe from the ice and gliding half a dozen yards on his one skate.

The boys were so happy that they took no note of time. Just before sunset Tommy noticed a large cake of floating ice lodge just above them.

"Willie," he said, "you stay here. I'm going to have a skate on that big cake." And he started off, skating at his best speed. But Willie, ignoring his instructions, hopped along after him on his one skate, and after Tommy had skated to the farther side of the newly arrived cake he turned and saw his little brother just coming on to it. A few minutes later, looking toward the shore, he noticed that the ice was moving.

Tommy was not very old, but he knew enough to understand the danger. He made his skates fly toward his brother, motioning him to go back, but it was too late. The cake parted from the firm ice, and before Tommy reached the firm ice, and before Tommy reached his brother there was an impassable gap of water between the two edges.

The boys were afloat on an ice cake on a broad river, darkness coming on

and the cold increasing every minute. There were but few boats passing, and they met none of these till it was too dark for them to be discovered. Willie, becoming cold, began to cry, but Tommy, feeling the responsibility of having his little brother to care for, kept a steady heart and, going to the edge of the ice, endeavored to attract attention. When he found that his efforts were useless he went back to Willie and, folding him in his arms, tried to keep him warm.

The moon came up slightly past the full and lighted up the bay into which the river broadened. An incoming steamer was making its way inward when the officer on the bridge called for his night glass. "Holt, I see a dark spot on that ice cake," he said to the man who handed him the glass, and, leveling it, he brought it to bear on the center of the cake. Then, lowering it, with horror on his face, he added: "Great heavens! There are two children on that cake of ice." Holt seized the glass, put it to his eye for a moment, then dashed away, shouting, "Lower the cutter!"

"Here, you, Simcox," he cried when the boat was lowered, "take the tiller!"

Simcox took the tiller as ordered, and Holt, a fine looking, muscular man, seized the stroke oar. The crew pulled away, but they had all been overworked on a hard winter passage from Gibraltar, and the tide was running out swiftly. They had pulled a few minutes when Holt noticed that they were making very poor headway. He had been away from his children for more than a year and connected them in his mind with the two on the ice cake either frozen or to be frozen if not rescued.

"I'll give every man of you," he said, "a month's extra wages if we reach the little ones and get them dead or alive."

Every oarsman bent to his work, and by dint of almost superhuman effort managed to pull the boat against the tide, which fortunately was slowly carrying the cake down stream, but unfortunately they were not in its line and were obliged to pull diagonally. This is why they must stem the tide.

They had a hard tussle, but at last made the edge of the ice cake. Holt and Simcox both jumped from the boat and ran to the center, where the chil-

dren were lying perfectly quiet, the older holding the younger in his arms. Both were asleep.

"They're dead!" said Simcox.

But Holt, taking them up, gave them a vigorous shake, and both opened their eyes. He told Simcox to alternately shake and rub them, while he took a flask of diluted liquor from his pocket that he had brought for the purpose and poured some of it down the boys' throats. Tommy revived quickly, but Willie, who had been asleep longer, was pretty far gone. Holt unbuttoned his own clothing and, holding the child near to his warm flesh, wrapped his clothes about him.

It was 2 o'clock in the morning when Holt drove up in a carriage with the two boys to their home. The house was lighted, for there was no sleep for the inmates. All the parents knew was that their boys' skates were missing, and it was surmised that they had gone skating. The only further explanation was that they had been drowned. The disconsolate pair were sitting awaiting a report from the police when they heard wheels, followed by a sharp pull at the doorbell. The husband sprang up and, closely followed by his wife, darted to the door and threw it open. There stood a stalwart man with their Willie in his arms, while Tommy stood beside him.

CHARLOTTE SHERWOOD.

The Shrike, or Butcher Bird.

There is a strange little bird, about as big as a robin, which nearly every winter brings us. He is generally alone, like a tiny black and gray hawk in many of his ways, but related truly to the gentle vireos and waxwings. He is the northern shrike, or butcher bird, and he gets a cruel living by catching mice and little birds, which he hangs on locust thorns, sharp twigs or the points of a wire fence, as his little feet, unlike the hawk's, are not strong enough to hold his prey. But he is a handsome fellow, and rarely one may hear a very sweet little song as he sits on the top of some leafless bush, particularly late in the winter. But generally he is silent, like the true birds of prey, or at best gives only a rasping squeal.—St. Nicholas.